

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 4-AWASHINGTON TIMES
1 August 1985

Negotiate with captors, hostages' kin ask

FILE ONLY

By Mary Belcher
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The families of four Americans abducted in Beirut over the past 17 months met with administration officials at the White House yesterday, calling for direct U.S. negotiations with their relatives' captors.

"We welcome the continuation of quiet diplomacy, but feel it can be supplemented with additional actions," said John Jenco, the nephew of the Rev. Lawrence Jenco who was abducted in Beirut Jan. 8.

"A direct dialogue with the captors should be attempted if success from intermediaries is not in the immediate future," said Mr. Jenco, speaking to reporters in a heavy downpour after an hour-long meeting with National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane.

The United States refuses to make concessions to terrorists and that policy "remains firm," said White House spokesman Larry Speakes.

"Our refusal to concede to terrorists does not mean, however, we are unwilling to talk," he said. U.S. officials continue to be in contact with "numerous individuals and governments" in the region to free the hostages, Mr. Speakes said.

"We believe that quiet diplomacy is the best way to proceed and believe that detailing our efforts to obtain their release would be counterproductive," he said.

The seven Americans held hostage in Lebanon include Father Jenco, Peter Kilburn, missing since Nov. 30, 1984; Terry Anderson, kidnapped March 16; David Jacobsen, who was seized May 28 as he walked to his office at the American University Hospital in West Beirut; the Rev. Benjamin Weir, missing since May 8, 1984; William Buckley, kidnapped March 18, 1984; and Thomas Sutherland, seized June 9.

In addition to Father Jenco's nephew, members of the Anderson, Jacobson and Weir families attended the meeting.

Calling the hostage situation "an American problem which needs an American solution," Mr. Jenco said, "We hope that without compromising the integrity of the government, the White House can demonstrate some flexibility as to possible solutions."

The family members said they were encouraged by their meeting with Mr. McFarlane and expressed hope they could speak soon with President Reagan.

"We brought the issue to city hall, and they have listened," Mr. Jenco said on behalf of the other hostage family members. "We would still like to voice our concerns directly to the president himself as soon as possible."

The families were happy to have met "with such a high-level official" as Mr. McFarlane, he said. The families had planned to meet with Vice President Bush instead, but scheduling problems prevented it.

The president has not given any reason for not meeting with hostage families at the White House, Mr. Speakes said. Mr. Reagan, who talked with members of Mr. Jenco's family on a recent trip to Chicago, met with members of his staff in the Oval Office throughout the day yesterday.

According to Mr. Jenco, yesterday's meeting with Mr. McFarlane reassured the families that efforts were being made to win the hostages' release.

Even Peggy Say, who has strongly criticized the administration's efforts to win the release of her abducted brother, Terry Anderson, a correspondent for the Associated Press said she was "very encouraged" by the White House meeting.

The meeting revealed "there are definite things being done" to resolve the hostage situation, said Mrs. Say.

But, she said, "quiet diplomacy has not gotten results in 500 days, so we need supplemental action." Like Mr. Jenco, Mrs. Say called for "high-level" administration officials to engage in "direct dialogue" with her brother's captors.

"We don't want to be seen as enemies of the administration. We want to work with them," she said. "We want to get

seven people home."

In addition to Mr. McFarlane, State Department terrorism expert Robert Oakley and Oliver North, National Security Council deputy director, met with the hostage families.

Mr. Jenco said U.S. officials do not seem to know where the hostages are being held, and they did not indicate who the kidnapers might be.

"I don't think at this point it makes much difference where the seven are," Mr. Jenco said. "It's just a matter of getting to the people who are holding them and negotiating."

Mr. Speakes, commenting on reports that a single Shi'ite Moslem family might hold control of the seven hostages, said the terrorist group Islamic Jihad has claimed responsibility for the abductions.

The New York Times reported yesterday that the seven hostages might be held by a family of Shi'ite fundamentalists seeking the release of a relative held in Kuwait for the 1983 truck bombings of American and French embassies there.

"We do not know whether the hostages are all being held together," Mr. Speakes said.

"We do not rule out the possibility that the hostages are being held by members of a clan. But we must note that in Lebanon, families and politics are often intertwined," he said.